

AN: Last time around, we learned that Sarafina had lost her unborn baby. Now she's an emotional wreck. Will she spiral into depression, or manage to stay in control? Find out in this exciting new *Poison* story!

Poison

Relapse

Sarafina sat alone in the hospital bed that evening, staring mindlessly out of the open window. A cool summer's breeze ruffled her fur, almost soothing the lioness into a peaceful state. The setting sun cast an orange glow over the room, leaving the place feeling warm – but not *too* warm.

It was anyone's idea of a perfect day.

But Sarafina was far from in the mood to admire the beautiful weather and pleasant temperature. Her mind was filled with a single thought. She kept repeating it. Over and over again. Like a broken record.

You're dead...

You're dead...

You're dead...

Two words. Repeated endlessly. The lioness couldn't help it. It was as if everything – her hopes, her ambitions, her dreams – had been drained right out of her by recent events. There was a hole in her heart, and she didn't think that anything would ever be able to fill it.

Her baby had died.

It didn't matter that the child was unborn. It didn't matter that she had only known that she was pregnant for a few days. It didn't matter that she knew this would happen as a result of her drug abuse.

Her baby had died.

It was something that no mother every wanted to experience, whether their baby was born or not. To lose a child – such a meaningful life – was the worst possible thing that could happen to anyone. The sadness – and, furthermore, the *guilt* – that Sarafina felt was incalculable.

It was all her fault.

The situation was a strange one, really. If Sarafina had never been on drugs, then she never would have become pregnant. Yet, it was because of the drugs also that the baby had perished.

After getting off the drugs – which she had been taking for more than four months now – her main priority was her unborn child. She wanted to pour all of her effort into looking after it and raising it to be the best it possibly could.

But that was no longer the case. The child was long since dead – due to a pressing amount of health complications – and there was nothing Sarafina could do about it. She just had to sit there and accept the fact that she was not only a filthy, dirty, scumbag of a person – but also that she was a killer.

She had taken drugs, sold drugs, and now they had resulted in the death of her own unborn child.

No one could sink any lower than that... surely?

Tears streamed down the lioness's cheeks. She just lay there, silent and unmoving. She didn't want to do anything. She just wanted to die there. In fact, she was praying for it. There was nothing left for her in this life... Nothing at all.

Just end it all, she thought, tempting herself. Put your claws to your throat and go for the jugular. It'll all be over within seconds...

But Sarafina couldn't even be bothered to put her own claws to her throat. It felt like too much work for her... It certainly wouldn't be very fun, either.

A sly thought suddenly crept into Sarafina's head.

Hmm... If you're going to go out, then go out with a bang.

A smile slowly began to form on Sarafina's face.

She knew *exactly* how to end all of this misery – and in a painless, happy way that would ensure she died with a smile on her face. That was how every person wanted to die. Peacefully.

Sarafina glanced at the door, made sure that no one would be entering the room anytime soon, and then quietly crawled out of bed.

Her paws thudded silently against the cool flooring. She stretched out her legs, injecting some life back into them. Her body had been rather

inactive after she fell unconscious earlier that day, so her muscles felt stiff and sore. Still, a few minutes of running would soon get her in shape again.

Sarafina knew that she couldn't leave through the door without being seen. She hadn't been discharged yet, so if she was found out of bed then she would most likely be sedated and sent straight back to the room. It would be pointless to try and escape that way.

Her eyes fell upon the open window.

Bingo.

Sarafina poked her head out of the window, and was thankful that her room was only one floor up. She didn't know what she would have done if she were on the sixth floor...

The lioness gently climbed out of the window, using her toe claws to get a good grip on the ledge outside.

She carefully reached out with a forepaw, grabbing a drainpipe fixed to the wall beside her. Slowly, she slid down the drainpipe, landing as gently as she possibly could on the ground below.

Thank God this hospital isn't too far away, Sarafina thought, observing the area. *Detective Dumbo must have carried me all the way here...*

If she were in any normal state, she would have found such a gesture touching – but there were more pressing matters on her mind.

She wanted to get high. Badly.

Death was stood at the edge of a cliff in the desert, overlooking the Sumu lab below. He was pleased.

His new cook, Wazimu, would be a much better employee than Scar. After all, the only thing that pathetic excuse for a lion did was complain and moan like a little girl. Wazimu wouldn't complain. He was being paid enough. Enough to make sure that he kept his mouth shut and did as he was told. That was all Death wanted from the chemist. Obedience.

Death frowned, sensing the presence of someone nearby.

"I know you're there," he said. "I can smell you."

A lion joined Death by his side. The Interceptor.

"What, do you think I'm trying to kill you or something?" the Interceptor asked. "That'd just be stupid, considering what you're paying me."

"I trust that you did the job, then?" Death said, turning to face the Interceptor. "The detective and his stoner friend are both dead, yes?"

"It took a few of my friends, but yes," the Interceptor said. "We blew the entire house up. You should have seen it."

"I hope that didn't arouse suspicion," Death said, raising an eyebrow at the assassin.

"People are just gonna assume it was a fire," the Interceptor said, wiping away Death's concerns. "There's nothing left for anyone to find."

"You're sure that you killed them?" asked Death. "You saw them die?"

"Well... not exactly," said the Interceptor, scratching the back of his neck. "But we blew the place to smithereens. I told you: there's nothing left."

"You fool!" Death snapped, causing the Interceptor to stumble backwards in surprise. "They could've escaped at any moment!"

"Hey, look, they—"

"I suggest that you had better take another look," Death interjected. "I want their bodies brought to me. They are the only things standing in the way of my operation. They have to be dealt with, and I need to know that they're dead. Am I making myself clear?"

"Y-yes," the Interceptor stammered. "Sure."

"Good," Death said. "Now, get out of my sight!"

Sarafina's skin felt like it was on fire by the time she reached the jungle. It had been a long time since her cravings had persisted this badly; however, her frail emotional state had obviously triggered something to go wrong. At that moment, she just wanted something she could smoke or snort.

The lioness squeezed in between two large bushes, finding herself in what she commonly referred to as 'home'.

It was nothing much. Just a small space consisting of nothing more than a few twigs and leaves. Sarafina often found it a calming place where she could smoke marijuana or snort Sumu without fear of being

disturbed.

And it was also where she kept her secret stash.

Sarafina reached underneath one of the bushes, pulling out a small bag of joints. She had stockpiled a few of them, just in case the cravings became too much one night.

She was definitely going to need some now.

The lioness stuck her forepaw into the bush again, rifling through it until she pulled out a small coconut half containing a small quantity of a purple liquid.

Liquid Sumu.

When injected into the system, it caused a high unlike any other. Not only was it the most effective drug for those who wanted to get high, but it was also the most dangerous. Anyone who started using Sumu in this way was likely to be dead within a few months.

"Oh, yeah, baby," Sarafina muttered, staring happily at the liquid Sumu. It was enough for a high.

Her *last* high.

"Yeah..." Sarafina smiled. "Just what I need."

A few minutes later, Sarafina was sat by the edge of the river, dipping her forelegs into the water.

She often found this place a calming influence. Well, that and it was the place where she often threw up into the water whenever the drugs made her sick. Still, the river had a peaceful atmosphere to it. No one was ever going to bother her around here.

Sarafina tore open the bag of joints, allowing them to spill onto the ground. She would smoke a few of them first, before injecting the liquid Sumu right into her veins and ending her miserable life.

She would go out in style.

Sarafina picked up one of the joints, also grabbing a lighter which had also been stuffed inside the bag. "Here goes nothing..."

The lioness lifted the lighter to the edge of the joint, ready to ignite it and begin her suicidal drug binge.

But she didn't.

No matter how much she wanted to – no matter how much she tried – Sarafina couldn't bring herself to light the joint.

She must have sat there for twenty minutes, just saying to herself, "Do it. It'll feel good."

But she didn't. She refused.

Maybe it was something at the back of her mind, or maybe it was something deep down in her soul that was preventing her from using the drug. She just couldn't do it.

And she never would. She knew she wouldn't.

Giving up, Sarafina allowed both the joint and the lighter to fall to the ground.

Jesus Christ, she thought, almost tearing her fur out in frustration. *What the hell is wrong with you? You can't even smoke a little joint anymore? You need to pull yourself together, girl!*

Sarafina then turned her attention to the coconut half containing the liquid Sumu.

It's just because you want to get to the good stuff, she told herself, before picking up the coconut half and a small shard of discarded metal next to it. *This'll really get ya going.*

The lioness dipped the piece of metal into the coconut half. The liquid instantly stuck to the metal like a strong adhesive. Liquid Sumu always had a sticky quality to it. Maybe that was fitting. After all, it seemed that anyone who used the drug was stuck on it for ever...

Sarafina stared at one of her forelegs. She knew from past experience that her skin would be easy to pierce; months of drug abuse had made her body rather weak.

Let's just get this over with, Sarafina told herself, pressing the shard of metal against her foreleg, ready to inject the Sumu into her system.

But she didn't puncture her skin.

Once again, she just sat there, wanting to use the drug, but finding herself unable to do so.

"Come on..." she growled, angry with herself. "Come on... come on..."

come on..."

All she had to do was dig the metal into her skin. It wasn't too hard. Even a child could do it.

"Do it... do it... do it..."

Sarafina stared at the liquid Sumu for what seemed like hours...

... and then burst into tears.

"No..."

She clenched her paw, tightening her grip on the shard of metal. She looked furious. Not with anyone else, but with herself.

"No more."

With an angry growl, Sarafina threw the piece of scrap into the river, before doing the same with the coconut half. She then gathered up all of the joints and swept them into the water, too.

She would never use them ever again.

"It's over," she told herself, done once and for all with the drugs. "It's over..."

"Sarafina."

The lioness looked over her shoulder to see Detective TPYMK stood a few feet away, his hands thrust deep into his trenchcoat.

"What are you doing here?" Sarafina asked. "How did you—"

"Well, once I noticed that you'd escaped," TPYMK explained, "it was pretty obvious to me that you'd come here. You always do. It's like your... safe place."

He spoke the truth.

"Yeah, well, I didn't want to stay in that hospital for a minute longer," Sarafina said. "It's not like I'm sick."

"You would've been more than sick if you took those drugs," TPYMK said, sitting down beside the lioness by the riverside.

Sarafina stared at him with a shocker expression. "How did you know what I've been doing?"

"Sarafina, I've been watching you for the past twenty minutes," he told her. "You should learn to turn your back more often."

"Would it make you feel better if I told you I was ashamed?" Sarafina retorted.

"No," TPYMK said. "Because you didn't use the drugs. You were strong enough to resist the cravings. You even got rid of them. I think it's a sign."

"A sign of what?" Sarafina asked bemusedly.

"A new future," TPYMK said, smiling at the lioness – for the first time – with admiration.

Sarafina laughed, looking away from him. She stared at the waters, feeling totally calm for the first time in a long while.

"You're my best friend," Sarafina admitted, unable to wipe the grin off her face. "How sad is that?"

"Think about how I feel," TPYMK retorted, also gazing at the waters. "It's not like I've got anyone else to talk to."

"No one?" said Sarafina, looking at him. "Really? No friends at all?"

"I've lost all of my friends," the detective said. "Well, I had this one friend before. Haiba, his name was. He was great. But... he's dead now."

"How?" Sarafina asked.

"A Sumu user killed him," TPYMK said, his expression turning cold. "And ever since then, I've vowed to do my best to try and get rid of that filthy drug. By any means possible."

"That explains everything," Sarafina said. "No wonder you're so... uptight. People like you always have some sort of dark past."

"Unlike you?" said TPYMK. "What about your history? How did you even get into drugs in the first place?"

Sarafina's face fell. "Well, normally, I'd say that my friend, Sarabi, got me on them," she said. "But, in reality, I think it was my fault, really. I just wanted an escape. To get away from my problems."

"What problems?" TPYMK questioned.

"I used to have a boyfriend," Sarafina said. "A guy called Muerto. But then I caught him cheating on me with some hooker, and after that I felt like tearing his manhood off and shoving it down his throat. After that, I went to my first party in the jungle... and that's when it all started."

TPYMK nodded in understanding. "I see."

"Good thing I found you, though," Sarafina said honestly. "Otherwise, I probably would've been dead by now." She chuckled. "Me, hanging around with a human. How ridiculous."

"What's wrong with humans?" said TPYMK.

"Nothing," Sarafina said. "I just don't see them often, that's all." She then narrowed her eyes. "In fact, I *never* see them. You're the first."

"That's because humans have been extinct for years," TPYMK said. "Except for me."

Sarafina's eyes widened. "What, you mean you're...?"

TPYMK nodded. "The last of my kind," he said. "The only human. Not a pleasant thought. I spend half of my life hanging around with former druggies when I could be doing something decent with my life."

"You *are* doing something decent," Sarafina insisted. "If you're still up for taking down that Sumu ring."

"I am," TPYMK said. "But are *you*?"

"They've taken everything from me," Sarafina said venomously. "And I think it's about time that we took everything from them."

"My house has been blown up, I haven't got any resources, and I have no idea what to do," TPYMK said. "Sounds like a good idea to me."

Sarafina smiled. "Let's give 'em hell."

"Yeah," TPYMK said, nodding. "Hell sounds good."

Unbeknownst to the two friends, nestled away in the bushes, someone was watching them.

The Interceptor.

"Ha-ha-ha," the Interceptor muttered, observing them from afar. "I like

it..."

I've got you now, he thought. You're dead.

To Be Continued...

AN: Yay! Sarafina resisted the drugs! However, you really can see that we're approaching the end of the series now. TPYMK and Sarafina are pretty much cornered. And with only two stories to go, anything can happen. Isn't this exciting?